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say that my faith and abiding confidence in him was never greater  
than since I have been in Washington  
I am called away

A. B. J.

## RED TAPE AT WASHINGTON IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS

The mind of the bureaucrat is as constant as the granite hills of New England, and the ways of red tape change not from generation unto generation. The letter which follows affords an interesting illustration of the workings of red tape in the days of our grandfathers. For the rest, it offers some comment on the problems before the second constitutional convention, of which Morgan L. Martin, recipient of the letter, was president. The writer, Philo White, was a man of consequence in his day, who played a prominent rôle in the upbuilding of early Wisconsin. White began and ended his career at Whitestown, New York. After a considerable career in New York, his health failing, he secured an appointment as naval storekeeper on the Pacific station. Several years later he established a paper at Raleigh, North Carolina, was soon elected state printer, and for a time was an active figure in state politics. Failing health caused another removal, this time to infant Wisconsin in the summer of 1836. Here White played an interesting part in the founding of the Milwaukee *Sentinel* and built the United States Hotel block, at the time the most imposing building in the city. Removing to Racine he became owner and editor of the *Advocate*, managed several farms, served in the territorial council of 1847 and 1848, and in the senate of the newly-admitted state. Both in his home community and at Madison his ability and leadership in public affairs gained full recognition. He left Wisconsin in 1849 to become consul general at the free cities of Hamburg, Lübeck, and Altona; later he served as minister to Ecuador for several years. On returning to the United States in 1858 he made his home at Whitestown, his native place.

HONBL. MORGAN L. MARTIN:

RACINE, 8th Jan'y, 1848.

DEAR SIR:

I really don't recollect whether I have had the honor of addressing you at Madison yet, for I have been so absorbed in other matters,—in correspondence with the Departments at Washington,

trying to *persuade* them to come to a *final* adjustment of some old suspended items in my accounts, which they think it requires the sanction of Congress to authorize them to settle, although they acknowledge the *justice* of them, &c: The *amount* is really hardly worth the *postage* on the correspondence that will take place in relation to the items, as it becomes requisite to transmit to and fro some tolerably heavy vouchers. But the *principle* on which these small *matters* are made to operate to my prejudice, are so monstrous, that I am almost disposed to go into Congress in search of justice: Let me name one or two cases: While attached to the Pacific Squadron, Com<sup>re</sup> Thos. Ap. Catesby Jones<sup>1</sup>, he sent Lieut. Griffith home in our ship, the "Dale," giving me a written order to pay the Lieutenant \$200 *advance*, to meet his expenditures home; we took him from Lima to Panama, from thence he went to Chagres by land, and in an English vessel from Chagres to Jamaica, where he died of fever. That \$200 they have checked against me, because Lieut. Griffith died before he worked out the amount, and somebody, they say, must lose the overpayment. Had I refused the order of Com. Jones, he would have arrested me, and sent *me* home: And moreover, I made the payment under protest, as required by the regulations of the Navy Department. It is very provoking; and I thought at one time I would go immediately on, and get consoled by abusing the accounting officers to their faces: But I am now giving them some plain talk by corresp<sup>ce</sup>.

Another case is this: A law of Congress allows "all persons belonging to the Navy," one fourth more pay in cases where those "persons" are detained on board a vessel of war on a foreign station after their term of service shall have expired. Well about 1/3<sup>d</sup> of the crew of the Dale's term of service expired while we were yet in the Pacific; and from the date of the expirations of service of every "person" on board, I credited them with 1/4<sup>th</sup> more pay until we arrived in the U. S; and they were paid off and discharged: But the Acct'g. Officers, in their *wisdom*, decided that the "*Marines*," who made part of our complement, did "not belong to the Navy"! And they checked all I thus paid to those Marines whose terms had expired, against *me*! I understand, however, the Att'y. Gen'l. has decided against them in this matter. I think yet, I may go on to Washington, after the adjournment of the Legislature.

Allow me to congratulate you, on your elevation to the Presidency of the Convention, a post which your talents and experience qualify you so well to fill, and in which your firmness and decision give dignity to the proceedings of the body, and contribute largely to the despatch of business.

I am gratified to see that you succeeded in carrying an amendment, which acknowledges the *principle* of *Exemptions*: It is a "progressive"

<sup>1</sup> Thomas ap Catesby Jones was a native of Virginia, born in 1789, who devoted his life to the naval service. In 1814 he made a brave defense of New Orleans against an overwhelming British naval force, surrendering only when he was desperately wounded and hope of escape was cut off. He was given command of the Pacific station off California in 1840, and learning on what he supposed to be good authority that the United States was at war with Mexico, he took possession of Monterey. For this he was temporarily suspended. He died at Georgetown, D. C., 1858.

principle, and we should have been behind the age had we "shirk'd" it in the Constitution.

I am really in hopes you will succeed in presenting us such a charter of our rights, as will secure the sanction of the Democracy, at least. I think there is a disposition to accept the *next* Constitution: The recent explosion in *several* of the Pennsylvania Banks, &c. ought at least to reconcile the whigs to tolerably stringent restrictions upon banking in Wisconsin: I trust those explosions will have a salutary influence on the minds of the Delegates, when they come to act on the bank Article.

We are *astir* in regard to a *Plank Road* hence to the West; I am making a long report in regard to their utility, &c to present to a meeting here on Friday next,—and expect to be instructed to procure a charter at our next session, &c. &c.

I should be obliged to you for one of King's Census Statements, should a spare one fall in your way.

Mrs. White joins me in regards to yourself and family, should Mrs Martin be with you.

Very truly your friend  
And obt serv't,  
PHILO WHITE